

Pentagon Says the Soviet May Have 2 New ICBM's

By WILLIAM BEECHER

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 26—Defense Department officials said today that the 60 new missile silos detected in the Soviet Union recently might be intended for two new types of intercontinental missiles rather than one, as suggested earlier.

But a Pentagon official conceded that there was still sufficient uncertainty about this that a quite different assessment advanced yesterday could not be excluded. This assessment was that the Russians, rather than seeking to deploy new types of weapons, were actually fashioning larger silos reinforced with concrete and other features to increase the silos' ability to withstand nuclear attack.

The Pentagon officials were reacting to reports by Senate Republican sources yesterday that the Central Intelligence Agency had concluded that two-thirds of the large new silo holes were intended for the relatively small SS-11 intercontinental missile and not for a large new weapon, as the Defense Department had suggested previously.

While this latest suggestion about the new silos left a number of questions unanswered, officials in various Government agencies insisted that this seeming confusion accurately reflected the wide areas of uncertainty that exist within the intelligence community.

The Central Intelligence Agency declined to comment on reports that it differed with the Pentagon's interpretation, but officials at the Defense Department and other agencies said there was no basic disagreement between the two.

On the public record, Jerry W. Friedheim, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, said it is now agreed throughout the Government that the new silos are of two sizes, but that the largest Soviet missile, the SS-9, could fit into either one.

Other sources explained that the idea of two different improved or all-new missiles arose in large part from the fact that Russia was rapidly rebuilding launching silos for both the large SS-9 and the smaller SS-11 missile at the Tyuratam missile test center near the Aral Sea.

The two types of rebuilt silos at the test center, they say, appear to conform precisely to the new silos being constructed at operational SS-9 and SS-11 missile complexes in the Ural Mountains.

Qualified sources explained that when the new holes first started appearing last December, they were measured at being slightly under 30 feet in diameter, somewhat larger than holes for the SS-9 silo.

"It was not a question of this spring, Pentagon and other officials speculated that these new silos might be for "hardened" or reinforced silos, an improved SS-9 or an entirely new missile. Pentagon officials stressed the latter two possibilities in most public and private statements.

Some Holes Are Larger

The new holes appeared at five of the six SS-9 complexes and at several SS-11 complexes. Within recent weeks, it was discovered that some of the holes, at both types of complexes, were two or three feet narrower than the others.

Then, more recently, intelligence reports showed that concrete liners placed inside these holes left inner cores of two different sizes. The difference between the two, sources say, is four feet.

The SS-9 has a diameter of about 10 feet, small enough to fit into either of the two silo types, officials say. The SS-11 has a diameter of roughly 6 feet.

Officials now note that from reconnaissance satellite altitudes of roughly 100 miles, it was difficult at first to discern the slight differences between the two types of excavations. The insertion of concrete missile liners, however, made clear they said that two types of silos were involved.

But officials concede that if the majority of the new silos are designed for smaller SS-11 type missiles, this would be considered a lot less menacing than if all were used for very large missiles of the SS-9 type. The SS-9, they explain, carries a nuclear warhead of 25 megatons and could carry three warheads of five megatons each, or six of two megatons each. A megaton is equivalent to a million tons of TNT.

If equipped with such large multiple warheads with accuracies approaching a quarter of a mile, analysts say, the SS-9 missile is considered a potential threat to destroy the 1,000 American Minutemen missiles in a first strike.

The Soviet Union is said to have just under 300 of the SS-9 missiles.

The SS-11, by way of contrast, carries a single warhead of roughly one megaton, officials note, and is not considered as much of a threat to the Minuteman. It could not carry very large multiple warheads, they conclude. The Russians reportedly have about 800 SS-11's.

When asked about the new silos at arms control talks in Vienna recently, Soviet officials reportedly told American officials not to worry, saying the silos merely represented a "modernization" program similar to the United States modernization of the Minuteman-3.

The United States for about a year has been replacing early model Minuteman-1 missiles with the Minuteman-3, carrying two or three warheads of about 160 kilotons each. A kiloton is equivalent to 1,000 tons of TNT. One hundred silos have been equipped with the Minuteman-3, in a program calling for 550 such missiles.

In the course of rebuilding the old Minuteman silos, the United States has been adding more concrete and improved suspension systems to increase, by a factor of three, the ability of the new missiles to withstand a nearby hit.

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Russ missile silos raise buildup query

EVENING TRIBUNE News Report

WASHINGTON — The new missile silos under construction in the Soviet Union may be for two separate missile systems, a Defense Department spokesman said yesterday.

The spokesman, Jerry W. Friedheim, said new evidence gathered over the past month gives some indication the Russians may be involved in "two separate systems of silo improvement."

Friedheim suggested the silos could be for either new missiles, existing missiles or perhaps only represent an effort to harden silos against attack.

"We are not certain what the Soviets' intentions are," he said. "That remains our current assessment."

CIA reports

Meanwhile, Senate Republican sources reported that the Central Intelligence Agency has concluded that at least two-thirds of the new silos recently detected in the Soviet Union appear to have been prepared for the relatively small SS11 intercontinental ballistic missile rather than a large new weapon.

Over the past months U.S. intelligence has reported the Soviets were building 60 new missile silos, raising alarms that the Russians were embarked on a new missile program and seeking a first-strike capability.

Friedheim said the Pentagon was still unable to make any final determination of what the Russians were up to. He said the new silo construction is continuing in areas of their existing SS9 and SS11 missile complexes.

Stockpiles used

Meanwhile in Mittenwald, Germany, Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird said Russia and the United States are adding to their nuclear missile stockpiles despite an agreement to talk about limiting them.

Both superpowers are maintaining conventional ground troops at present strength in central Europe, although Moscow now has indicated an interest in discussing mutual and balanced reductions of these forces.

Diplomats from North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries will undertake exploratory talks with Moscow immediately in hopes of learning within the next six to eight weeks whether the Russian interest is sincere, U.S. officials said.

Eight nations attend

These were the highlights of a two-day meeting of NATO's eight-nation nuclear planning group.

Manlio Brosio, secretary general of NATO, told a news conference the defense ministers comprising the nuclear planning group "are trying to prevent war before waging it."

"You cannot have a good preventive if you do not have a good deterrent," Brosio said.

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New Soviet Silo Building Seen As Protection for Two Missiles

By Michael Gettler

Washington Post Staff Writer

The Pentagon said yesterday that the new, large missile silos being built in the Soviet Union now appear to be designed for two different kinds of ICBMs, but conceded that more than half of the new holes may be for the relatively small and less threatening SS-11 ICBM.

Defense officials said that new intelligence gathered since late last month indicated that the silo building program—which touched off scares here of a new arms race—may be meant in part to provide better protection for Russian missiles, both the SS-11s and the huge SS-9s, against U.S. attack, rather than as a big expansion of the Soviet SS-9 force.

However, Pentagon spokesman Jerry W. Friedheim made it clear that the Pentagon's "best judgment remains that either new missiles or modifications of existing missiles" will go into the "two separate systems of silo improvement."

Privately, Defense officials say they believe the most likely prospect now is that the Soviets will combine their silo hardening effort with installation of improved versions of both missiles, rather than with any completely new ICBM even bigger and more ominous than the existing SS-9.

Of some 60 new ICBM silos that U.S. spy satellites have spotted since this February, well-informed defense officials say that 20 to 25 are under construction in missile fields normally associated with existing SS-9 bases and 35 to 40 at SS-11 bases. No missiles have actually been installed in any of the new holes so far, the officials say.

Friedheim yesterday explained that the original detection of the new silos showed "diameters large enough to encompass any missile in the Soviet inventory."

Disclosure of the new silos was first made publicly on March 7 by Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.), and was later confirmed by Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird.

While the Pentagon has said all along that it was not sure if the holes were for a completely new missile or for a modification of the existing SS-9, the impression was generally created that whatever it was, it was very big. It is the SS-9, equipped with multiple warheads, which the Pentagon has portrayed as the major threat to knocking out U.S. Minuteman ICBMs in a surprise attack.

There was no official indication given until yesterday that the new holes might be for protecting small ICBMs as well.

The SS-11 carries a much smaller warhead than the SS-9 and is not viewed as a first-strike weapon.

Friedheim said that while it was still unclear what Soviet intentions were "new information now available to us leads us to conclude the Soviets may be involved in two separate silo improvement programs" rather than just one.

The new evidence, other sources say, was photos of different size protective concrete liners for the missile silos which reduce their inside diameters and of different base layouts used for the two missiles.

Friedheim said that in the past the Russians have installed SS-11 ICBMs into what heretofore have been bases used exclusively for shorter range missile.

Privately, Defense officials conceded that the latest developments, if they do not change, are less provocative than a big Soviet drive to add still larger missiles. Splitting the new silos between SS-9s and SS-11s also seems to fit in with U.S. objectives at the strategic arms limitation talks.

Washington hopes to hold down the number of Soviet SS-9s to about 300.

The Soviets now have almost 288 SS-9s on the firing line and presumably will add 20 to 25 more in the new silos.

Friedheim denied there had been disagreement between the CIA and the Pentagon over assessing the meaning of the silo construction program in recent weeks.

Nevertheless, Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.) yesterday called the episode the "the shortest missile gap in history."

Proxmire accused both Laird and Jackson of whipping up "a series of scare 'em stories" based on the "wholly unproved assumption that these holes were all designed for the huge new 25-megaton SS-9 missiles."

"The lesson is clear," Proxmire contended. "The practice of selective disclosure of partially analyzed intelligence data by the Pentagon and its allies should stop. Congress and the American public must not be swept off their feet by leaks designed merely to propagandize for a bigger and fatter military budget."